

GYMNASTIC PAPERS

EDITED BY

JAKOB BOLIN

645 Madison Avenue,

New York City

Series A

Number 1

**What is
Gymnastics?**

BY

JAKOB BOLIN



PRICE:—TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

Copyrighted, 1902, by **JAKOB BOLIN**

TITLE	
U	
CALL	W554
DATE	10/10/11
NO.	QT 255
	1702
	B62W



22500895485

Edgar F. Cyriac



303850
Cyriac 66.

Introduction

The intention with the papers in this series is to furnish a brief statement of the most important general principles which ought to govern us in gymnastics for normally healthy and normally developed individuals, the adjectives being used in the sense in which they are employed in common parlance; and also, upon the basis of these general principles, to explain the characteristics of the gymnastic exercises most frequently employed in such work. In other words, we will not consider gymnastics for those who are perfect in health and development, because such perfection seldom, if ever, exists. Nor shall we give consideration to the treatment by gymnastics of those who are admittedly ill or abnormal in body or mind. We will deal only with gymnastics for the average man, woman and child, as we find them plying their vocations and attending to their duties. It is, however, not our intention to intimate by this statement that the different branches of gymnastics are so distinct and separate that there are no points of contact between them. On the contrary, all branches of gymnastics are most intimately connected, and, in fact, overlap in many places and we will probably have opportunities to touch on some of their relations. I simply wish to emphasize, at the very beginning, that we are here specifically concerned with that branch which the Swedes call "frisk-

gymnastik," the nearest German equivalent of which is "Turnen," but for which there exists no single word in the English language, in which it is variously designated as hygienic, dietetic, physiologic, pedagogic, educational, civic, popular or school gymnastics, in contradistinction to therapeutic, medical, remedial, corrective, æsthetic, and military gymnastics. If I were to distinguish this branch of gymnastics from the others by a specific adjective, I would perhaps denote it as developmental gymnastics, because the word development seems to me to exactly cover the purpose of this gymnastics, as I see it, nothing more nor less; while all the other terms just enumerated, and many other similar ones, in many minds at least, designate only a part of the aim which should be kept in view. There is not one of them which does not emphasize a single phase of the subject with the more or less complete exclusion of the other sides. If any one of them be accepted, the very name will therefore tempt us to forget in practice some features, at the expense of which other sides may be enhanced. If we use the term hygienic gymnastics, the hygienic aim is so constantly kept before our minds that we can hardly escape a tendency to minimize other aspects. How could, for instance, he who admittedly practises hygienic gymnastics be expected to give any attention to the development of courage and self-reliance, or to the refinement of the processes involved in sensation, or to the shortening of the reaction-time, or to the growth of will-power, or to any of those functions to foster which is the aim of the school? He will naturally give his attention to the functioning of the heart and the lungs, the stomach and the liver, the skin and the kidneys, and so on, but will perhaps forget the relationship between the brain as an organ of the mind and the nerves and the muscles as

organs which execute the orders of the former. Similarly, if we call this branch educational gymnastics, we are prone to allow the educational aims in the strictest sense to overshadow the hygienic ones. But the kind of gymnastics which we wish to consider here is not hygienic merely, nor educational merely, but its aim is a double one. Were we to choose school gymnastics as a proper designation, we might perhaps be led to overlook the fact that it is not only the school population which is in need of this kind of gymnastics, but the whole people, adults as well as children, even though it lies in the nature of things that we must first of all consider the youth of the land. And so on with all the terms mentioned. The only objection that I can myself advance against the term developmental gymnastics is the fact that one writer¹ has spoken of a particular school or system as "the developmental school of gymnastics," because, rightly or wrongly, this school, which may be said to embrace most of the native American gymnasts, is supposed to strive for the development of each individual toward symmetry and accordance with a fixed imaginary standard of the physically ideal man. If upon examination it be found that the circumference of one arm is smaller than that of its fellow, the adherents of this school would set about to make them equal; if the arms be unusually small and flabby when compared with the legs, the aim would be to adjust the relation; if a man be found of a certain height and age, whose chest expansion is smaller than that of the average man of that height and age, one of the main objects of this school would be to increase it at least to this average; and so on.

1. A. E. ARNOLD: Some of the Principles that Guide Me in Teaching German Gymnastics. In the Report of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education. Concord, N. H., 1896. Also in "Mind and Body," Nos. 22-23, Milwaukee, 1895-6.

This is a development worth striving for, to be sure. But I mean something more when I speak of development than such changes as may be measured by the tape, calipers or spirometer, and I would call this school the anthropometric one, because from it has come the impulse to judge the results of our work by actual measurements. Even if we believe that the measurements in vogue are inadequate or inappropriate, it does not detract from the honor due this school for having pointed out as none before them that a science of gymnastics can never grow up except upon the basis of some kind of measurements. Measurements were taken by the Swedes and the Germans long before this American school arose, to be sure, but they were too sporadic and too devoid of precision to have any real value as scientific data.

Since the above was written, I notice that the term developmental gymnastics ("Gymnastique de développement") has already been used by Demeny,¹ and it is therefore very probable that I have unconsciously drawn upon him in the above.

1. *Résumé de Cours Théoriques sur l'Education Physique*. Le Mans, 1886, p. vi.

What Is Gymnastics?

"The grandfather of the German Turnen" defined gymnastics as "a system of exercises having bodily perfection for aim." It is convenient to use this definition as a starting point in elucidating what might properly be embraced in the term. It may perhaps by many be considered pedantic to spend time in endeavoring to define closely such a term with the contents of which all of us are supposed to be perfectly familiar. But it may be excused on the ground that nothing is more conducive to sterile discussions than ambiguity in the terms employed, and that frequently a great deal of time and worry may be saved by our going back occasionally to the very elements of our conceptions in order to criticize them in the light of the new experiences we may have gained since their first formation, experiences which often will be found of such nature as to force us to modify somewhat the terms in which we have been wont to express them.

In considering the definition of Guts Muths, it may be well to note first what the word exercises implies. That it here means repeated endeavors to execute certain movements of the body or to maintain it in certain positions, we easily agree. But already Galen made the statement that "every movement is not an exercise." And though in our day we may be unanimous in oppos-

ing his assertion that only strong movements shall be considered as exercises, we have reason to enter into investigation whether or not the first part of his statement contains the truth, and if so what movements really are exercises and which are not. Guts Muths, as far as I know, never expressed himself definitely on the question what kind of movements he would recognize as legitimate exercises, though there are several passages in his works by which he plainly shows that he agrees with Galen in the exclusion of some movements. On the other hand, many of his countrymen have repeatedly repudiated this position. Not always in intention, perhaps, but by their words. Spiess admittedly strove for a gymnastic system which was to include all possible movements of the body. Pestalozzi, when speaking of his articular movements, used the expression "completeness" in the sense of embracing all possibilities, though he never carried out his idea of completeness to the extent that Spiess did, and, of course, would have absolutely refused to countenance the absurdities found in de Laspée's work,¹ even though the latter audaciously claimed to found it on Pestalozzian principles. It is works like this gymnastic curiosity which show us plainly the necessity of being strict in our first fundamental statements. No one can deny the great value of Pestalozzi's work for physical training, and still we have here a book, claimed to be based on those of the great pedagogic reformer, which show us in a hundred ways how gymnastics should not be taught, be it on Pestalozzian or on any other common-sense principles.

But we need not go back to the pioneers in the field of physical training, whose words may and frequently

1. HENRY DE LASPÉE: *Calisthenics, or the Elements of Bodily Culture on Pestalozzian Principles*. London: Chas. Griffin & Co. 1865.

have been misunderstood simply because they did not guard themselves against a misunderstanding which they could not foresee. Authors of a much later date have stepped into the arena consciously to wage war for the opinion that a system of gymnastics must be all-embracing, must include all possible movements. Among these none stands forth so prominently, none is looked up to by the upholders of everything in the German system, be it good, bad or indifferent, with as much reverence and awe as the late professor of physiology at the University of Berlin, the eminent scientist, Dr. Emil du Bois Reymond. It was in the celebrated strife about the general usefulness or injuriousness of the parallel bars. Rothstein, sent by the Prussian Government to Sweden to study the methods of gymnastics in vogue there, had returned to Germany filled to overflowing with enthusiasm for what he had seen and heard. Appointed the official head of gymnastics in Prussia, he sharply, and frequently in too inconsiderate terms, criticized the methods born and fostered on German soil. Instead of treating the matter with that tact and consideration which we always owe our opponents in a scientific controversy, and which is doubly incumbent on those who claim to be leaders in the educational field, he took occasion to abuse the German gymnasts for their ignorance, to scoff and sneer at the men who, whatever we may say of their scientific attainments at the time, certainly already had done an immense amount of valuable work from a practical and proselytic standpoint in agitating for the recognition of physical training as a necessary part of education. These actions of Rothstein's are among the most deplorable events in the history of gymnastics. The rather theoretical than practical mistake of Spiess, if we even go so far as to call it a mistake at

all, in endeavoring to make, on paper, a system of all-possibilities, leaving to the teacher the selection of such forms as he would consider suitable to incorporate in his exercises, would undoubtedly have done far less harm than Rothstein's undignified warfare. Spiess probably caused the acceptance of many forms which never should have been admitted into gymnastics. But such matters are generally regulated by time, and signs were already multiplying that the hard-headed Teutons were undertaking a selection. Instead of assisting them in this difficult task as one among them, he put himself up as a master over them, as of better clay than they, laying the lash on as hard as he possibly could, and by so doing he quite naturally aroused their antagonism. Nor can we admit that Rothstein always followed the precepts from Sweden in matters of principles. Believing, as he undoubtedly did honestly, that the majority, if not all, of the movements performed by the Germans on the parallel bars were injurious, he did not endeavor to work for a more rational procedure on this darling apparatus of the Germans, but declared war against the apparatus itself, wanting it abolished in the country. I do not mean to intimate that it would have done the cause of gymnastics any harm had the parallel bars vanished for good. On the contrary, I sincerely believe that gymnastics would have benefited by it, and du Bois Reymond's assertion that if we had not the parallel bars we must invent them¹ is only one of the many absurd statements of this author. But Rothstein should have foreseen the impossibility of forcing a whole nation to such a step against their will, even by the strength of governmental dicta. We may be with Rothstein in this struggle in our capacity of gymnasts, but as men and believers

1. Über das Barrenturnen. Berlin : G. Reimer. 1862. P. 14.

in freedom of thought we certainly cannot withhold our sympathies from his opponents. He might have been able to secure the gradual elimination of the parallel bars by convincing arguments, if he had such at his disposal. That he fortified such as he used by the power of his official position must deprive him of a great part of our sympathy. And, pupil of Branting, he should have remembered that one of the principles of the system which he advocated is this, that any method which depends on the existence or non-existence of a given apparatus has no inherent value; that "the apparatus is of no importance compared to the organism," and that "no apparatus is absolutely necessary, and though some apparatus are better than others, none is so poor that it may not be put to good use by a competent teacher." The result of Rothstein's indiscretions was what might have been anticipated. The growing feeling that a selection was imperative was stifled by wounded pride. All admissions that every possible movement did not belong in a gymnastic system were withdrawn with emphasis. Du Bois Reymond took up the gauntlet thrown down by the iconoclast, and in a couple of peppery pamphlets he proved, according to his delighted compatriots, "the absolute nothingness of the Swedish system," showing up "the hollowness of its principles," and in the heat of the battle, throwing overboard the idea of a rational selection, he audaciously declared: "That is rational, which is possible for the body, and nobody but the body itself shall place limits for its activity."¹ Here the principle of all-possibility was declared in plain words by a man whose standing in the scientific world carried conviction to those who wavered in their allegiance. And it is to great extent because of these words by du Bois Reymond that the German sys-

1. Op. cit., p. 28.

tem up to our own day has been hampered by the lack of a suitable selection. It is true that the principle now is theoretically abandoned. It is true that the German gymnasts, like their Swedish brethren, now work for a selection. But nobody can deny that they have been hindered in their advance by this destructive principle, which has been hanging around their necks like an old man of the sea, so that in this respect and from a practical standpoint they have advanced very little beyond the position held just prior to the Barrenstreit. The words of du Bois Reymond could not pass unheeded. They are a defense for the most absurd procedures. As long as they are not definitely repudiated, they will be quoted in refutation of any criticism, however well-grounded. When all is considered rational, which is possible, there is no wrong way of executing a movement. All ways are equally legitimate. Nor have we any reason to exclude any possible movement. It is perfectly possible, at least for some, to bite in a bar with such strength as to suspend the body by means of the jaws, as Spiess described it.¹ Practise it then. It is rational! It is possible to move the eyes to the right or to the left, upward or downward, as de Laspée recommended. Do it, then, in the gymnasium. It is possible to make a handstand wiggling the toes in the air. Why not do it as an exercise? It is rational, says du Bois Reymond. Such are the legitimate children of his dictum, and they have found their defenders. Nobody now advocates exactly these absurdities, though others, differing from them in degree not in kind, are quite common. However, the year 1862 is gone forever. Germans, Swedes and all other nationalities are now perfectly agreed that a selection of the gym-

1. Die Lehre der Turnkunst. Zweiter Theil. Zweite Auflage. Basel Hugo Richter. 1871. Pp. 156-7.

nastic material must take place among the vast number of possible movements. The principle of all-possibility is dead. The principle of selection, the fundamental principle of the Swedish system since its inception, reigns supreme. But when we come to the practical application of this principle there is, and must, of course, always be, a considerable divergence of opinion, whether or not a definite form of movement is of such a character as to warrant its incorporation in a rational system of gymnastics. This divergence of opinion does not, however, need to be so great as it at present appears. As knowledge grows, the basis upon which the selection is undertaken must necessarily become more uniform, while at the same time perfect freedom to use such forms as are not interdicted by any definite principle will exist for all, as it now does in all systems.

To make the various opinions coincide more closely than they do at present, it is necessary for us to establish a basis by which we may be guided in making, among all possible movements, the selection of those forms which may properly be used as gymnastic exercises. If we then for the present turn away from the definition of Guts Muths to that of Ling, the originator of the Swedish system, we find him making the declaration that "gymnastics" (in a wider sense than that in which we here employ the term) "is bodily movements in harmony with the laws of the organism," or, as he at another occasion expressed himself, "movements in harmony with the conditions and needs of the organism."

This demand of Ling for correspondence between the character of the movement and the condition of the moving organism was, of course, not original with him. Guts Muths expressed the same idea in different words. It supports those tendencies toward a selection which we

have already noticed as prevalent among the older true-blue Germans. It agrees perfectly with Vieth's statement that "in the selection of exercises consideration must be taken to the age, physical development, power and temperament of the pupil, . . ." A kind of selection to which, of course, every gymnastic teacher, of whatever nationality and period, unhesitatingly agrees. To a certain extent it also coincides with du Bois Reymond's position. When the latter asserted that everything is rational which is possible, he, of course, also meant that endeavors to do the impossible are irrational. Ling and he would no doubt have agreed in condemning exercises not permitted by the anatomical structure of the normal body, even though du Bois Reymond denied the need of any anatomical or physiological knowledge for those who make and arrange exercises.¹ Some will perhaps maintain that it is not necessary to assert that such movements should not even be tried which are prohibited by the very anatomical construction of the body. I do so, however, because such exercises have been described by some authors of prominence. Thus, for instance, Dr. Kloss, Director of the Royal Normal School of Gymnastics at Dresden, recommended circumductions in the elbow joint.²

But Ling said not only that the movements must be in harmony with the conditions, but also "with the needs of the organism." Though so far as I know, none of

1. "Um Leibesübungen zu erfinden und zu ordnen bedarf es keiner Philosophie, keiner Anatomie und Physiologie. Die Anatomie und Physiologie, die man dazu braucht, ist keine andere als die mit uns geboren ist. . . ." *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

2. *Die weibliche Turnkunst*. Vierte durchgesehene Auflage (Leipzig, 1889. P. 222), where under the name of "Unterarmkreisen" is described a circumduction of the forearms "ohne Mitbeteiligung der Oberarme." If I understand his language correctly, the same author has also an equally impossible circumduction in the knee joints (*Katechismus der Turnkunst*, Sechste, vermehrte u. verbesserte Auflage. Leipzig, 1887, p. 139.) We would be prone to believe that such statements are due rather to an unhappy choice of words than to an error in thought. But the fact that they have been criticized from their very first appearance and are still retained in several successive editions gives at least some support to the belief that Kloss endeavored to extend the principle of all-possibility into the realm of the impossible.

the prominent Germans, with the exception of Guts Muths, has definitely expressed an opinion in the matter, I believe we must take for granted that all of them subscribe to Ling's assertion, and endeavor to do nothing which is not according to their opinion needed by the organism. Guts Muths expressed himself rather strongly in the matter: "Therefore it is no more out of place to warn against too multifarious exercises than to warn against the multiplying of subjects in the common school. Nearly as limitless and numberless as are the mental exercises are those of the body, but wishing to learn everything is folly, and wishing to practise everything is the same."¹ Thus in principle Swedes and Germans again meet upon the same platform; again they are as one in their purposes. That they go different ways to gain their objects; that they, if we judge from their practices, have different views with regard to what does and what does not correspond with the needs of the organism, does not by any means invalidate this statement. It is always best, before entering into a discussion of points at issue, to make clear those to which all agree. And so far, there seems to be, theoretically, at least, full and complete accord between the Swedish and the German systems, if we except the assertions of du Bois Reymond and those who followed his lead in the excitement due to the invasion of Germany by Swedish gymnastics under Rothstein, and, of course, always with the exception of some such in various countries, who, like de Laspée in England, practised movements of eyes, tongue, lips, etc., all of which is no less condemned by the true German gymnasts than by the Swedes.²

1. Turnbuch für die Söhne des Vaterlandes. Frankfurt-am-Mayn. 1817. Preface.

2. See, for instance, Kloss: Katechismus, pp. 95-96.

If, however, Swedes and Germans in theory stand together so far as to declare that movements, in order to be accepted as gymnastic exercises, must correspond both to the conditions and needs of the organism, there can be no doubt of their opposition to each other when they get down to practical work. To prove it we need only look over the works describing exercises used by the two schools, and we will find numerous forms which are accepted by the Germans, but vigorously rejected by the Swedes. If we take Spiess as a representative of the German system we find him, for instance, enumerating not less than ten different modes of standing, each of which he says is to be practised with both legs at the same time, with one leg, and alternately with the right and the left. It may be well to give these postures in order to convey an idea of what Spiess' completeness of system meant. He has

1. Standing on the heels, by a moderate dorsal flexion of the feet.
2. Standing on the balls, by a moderate extension of the feet.
3. Standing on the heels, by increased dorsal flexion of the feet.
4. Standing on the toes, by increased extension of the feet.
5. Standing on the outer edge of the feet, by their inversion.
6. Standing on the inner edge of the feet, by their eversion.
7. Standing on the outer edge of the heels, by dorsal flexion and inversion.
8. Standing on the inner edge of the heels, by dorsal flexion and eversion.

9. Standing on the outer edge of the balls, by extension and inversion.

10. Standing on the inner edge of the balls, by extension and eversion.¹

What the needs of the normal organism may be for which all these peculiar postures are necessary or desirable is a matter to which we plead ignorance. Nobody denies that a peculiarity of structure may in very rare cases make such postures useful, but that does not help Spiess at all. He dealt not with anomalies, but with normally healthy, normally developed individuals, just as we do.

Not satisfied with this, Spiess also wanted these postures to be combined with the various forms of "Spreizstellungen" (p. 51) and numerous other postures, and gives marches (p. 92), jumping (p. 106), and running (p. 146) in them all. Spiess himself seems to have got some idea of the injuries which might be brought about by the practice of these forms, because of some of them he says that they are not quite suitable for practice ("weniger zur Uebung geeignet"). But if so, why include them at all in the system?

Grant now that Spiess, as revealed in his oldest works, *i. e.*, before he came under the influence of the Swedish gymnasts, is no longer representative of German gymnastic thought. Grant that German gymnastics has grown since his day, has left him in the rear, has arrived at some of the principles which marked Ling from the beginning; for instance, this one of a proper selection according to the conditions and needs of the organism. Grant that here is one example to prove the statement that "the German system of gymnastics is at

1. ADOLF SPIESS : Das Turnen in den Freiübungen. Zweite Auflage. Basel. 1867. P. 48.

all times ready to admit of improvement, but not until it has been clearly and undisputably shown that the proposed improvements are really such, and not idle illusions, which, under a high-sounding name and an apparently scientific garb, are calculated to impress and mislead the inexperienced.”¹ Granted that the Germans have thrown out a large mass of the curiosities from the days of Spiess, which stood forth in sharp contrast to Ling’s simple procedure. Grant that they thereby have gained a real improvement, not “an idle illusion.” Grant that this exclusion of a large number of unnecessary forms, by which they have approached the ideals of the Swedes somewhat, has been a result of internal development among the Germans themselves, a growth of their own common sense, and I for one am perfectly willing to admit this and very much more, if we only sometime could get rid of the “*jalousie de métier*” which prevails between the two schools. Grant this, and we may perhaps still be allowed to assert that even in our day the German system is not perfect so far as the forms used are concerned, that they need a new sifting-process, that a new selection needs to be undertaken in order to get rid of much chaff still mingled with the wheat. Now, if this or any other system is not perfect, if it needs some improvement, then it is certainly not a wise policy of its adherents to refuse to listen to criticisms by those having different opinions. I am sure that all Swedish gymnasts will admit without hesitancy that the Germans have the requisite ability to place their work upon as high a level as that of any other nation without any external help whatever. One prominent among them in this country has proclaimed this ability of theirs to take care of them-

1. WILLIAM FLECK in “A Text-book of the German-American System of Gymnastics,” edited by W. A. Stecher. Boston. 1895. P. 1.

selves, and has said that their system "has not been influenced by any other."¹ I hardly believe that this latter statement would stand in the light of historical criticism, and think that I myself could point out such influence in several directions, a fact for which the Germans should receive nothing but praise. But if true, it points to a self-sufficiency and narrowness in conception which, if persisted in, cannot but be detrimental to the cause of physical training, however gratifying to national pride and faith in dogmas it may appear. To refuse to accept a truth, however small, from others, simply because these others are not of the same set, is to make gymnastics, education and the children of our land suffer. If my words happen to reach any Germans, I wish to say with all the little force at my command that it is not as opponents, as competitors, as masters that the Swedes of to-day come to you in order to make you accept that which you repudiate. That attitude was taken by Rothstein, and it would be well if we could all forget it. It may perhaps appear as if the Swedes even now try to stand upon an imaginary pedestal, looking down with contempt upon those around. But I am sure that in most cases, at least, it is only apparent because of the strong language we all are apt to use when we earnestly plead for what we consider right in an important question. And if it is real, it emanates from that superficial knowledge which can be found in all camps. We now come to you as men having the same aim as you, the same holy cause at heart as you. We come as friends and collaborators in the same field, offering you to partake of some of the good things which we think we have found, and which we think have escaped your notice, willing at the

1. H. METZNER: Report of the Physical Training Conference in Boston, 1899, p. 27.

same time to accept from you whatever you can offer us in exchange to further our common cause. Let the old strife be ended, the old warfare closed, the old hatred extinguished. Let the forces join under the same banner, to strike powerful strokes for gymnastics, for our children, for our youth, for our men and women, for coming generations, to the glory of all lands. In this matter of a proper selection, for instance, we think that we have seen the light of noon, while for you the day has hardly broken. Listen to what we have to say. Reject everything which does not seem to you to be based on good grounds, but do not refuse that which you cannot gainsay.

Ling's definition of gymnastics, then, only makes clearer that of Guts Muths, without changing its meaning, and we may, therefore, be permitted to substitute the former for the latter, so far as we have hitherto scrutinized the two. To avoid later complications, it is well here to call attention to the fact that Ling included in his term movements also active postures, used as exercises, and as I am sure there can be no objection to have this plainly indicated, I will temporarily transcribe Guts Muths' definition so as to read: "Gymnastics is a system of postures and movements in harmony with the conditions and needs of the organism, having bodily perfection for aim."

But this expression, "bodily perfection," may perhaps cause some misunderstanding. There are as yet very many who cling to the old dualistic conception of man as composed of two distinct entities—body and mind. Perhaps they do not do so in that sense that they are willing to make themselves sponsors for such a conception, but it is certain that they are not so thoroughly imbued with the more modern doctrine of mind as merely the

other side of nervous processes that it has taken complete possession of them and become the moving force within them. Therefore, though it may be perfectly safe, so far as the leaders of thought are concerned, to say with Guts Muths that the purpose of gymnastics is bodily perfection, it is at least not politic to do so, because many will accept that term in a narrower sense than that imposed upon us by the modern view of man. It can certainly do no harm to choose our words so as to completely close any loophole for those who still look upon body and mind as antagonistic in their nature. That there actually does exist a danger of ambiguity in this regard is evident, among other things, from the well-known fact that the support given to any form of physical exercise in our educational system is mainly due to the dissemination of knowledge that health becomes seriously impaired by the methods of instruction so long prevalent in our schools, to the general belief that this impairment of the body must inevitably be associated with intense "mental training," and that "physical training" is able to counteract these evil results of the school work by restoring the equilibrium between body and mind, supposedly lost by overloading the latter. So is the popular belief of our day. So it has always been. The success hitherto gained in incorporating physical training as an integral part of our educational system is due to this popular belief. Few indeed are those who perceive that the loss of health is due not to a too strenuous mental training but to erroneous methods employed in it. Few are there who understand that what is conveniently called physical training is not only a means to preserve health by being put in opposition to mental training, but that it is at the same time a method of mental training, the opening of new avenues to the mind, so that the gym-

nastic exercises at the same time that they tend to preserve or restore health, actually complement, fortify, intensify and enrich the mental training gained by other methods. And still fewer are those who are ready to accept the newer psychological doctrine that no consciousness, no mental life, no idea, no thought, no emotion can exist without a muscular contraction, which is the fundamental basis of mind. For these reasons, then, it would seem advantageous and conducive to a clear understanding to emphasize in plain words the effects of gymnastics upon the so-called mental nature as well as upon the body and to make evident their intimate relations to each other. This demand seems to be fulfilled by the definition of Ling, according to whom gymnastics in the limited sense in which we are taking the term, or, in other words, developmental gymnastics, is that branch "by which man learns to place his body under control of his will." It seems, therefore, better from all viewpoints to substitute Ling's definition for that of Guts Muths, and say that gymnastics is the application of postures and movements in harmony with the conditions and needs of the organism for the purpose of placing the body under control of the will.

This definition not only corresponds with Ling's idea, but also to Guts Muths' conception of "gymnastik," and to the "Turnen" of the older Germans. But is it also descriptive of gymnastics in our time? The "gymnastik" of Guts Muths and Ling, as well as the "Turnen" of the former, of Jahn, and others, included not only the formal, methodical exercises as they are executed in the gymnasium or on the "Turnplatz," but an equally integral part of their systems was free, spontaneous activity in the open air, such as plays and games, running races, jumping ditches, climbing trees and hills, swim-

ming, skating, coasting, sailing, etc. These terms were practically synonymous with a free and happy active out-of-door life, enlivened by sports. Is it so with these terms to-day?

When the Swedish "gymnastik" and the German "Turnen," which by Jahn has been substituted for Guts Muths' original term, clashed in later years, efforts were made on both sides to emphasize the differences rather than to point out the similarities. Rothstein and his followers, among whom might be quoted at least one prominent representative of the Swedish system in the United States, accused their opponents of "picnicking," while the latter criticized the Swedes for laying all stress on the formal movements, none on pleasure and youthful animation.

To find what grounds there were for these mutual accusations and their explanations it is necessary to look over the historical development of physical education, the forces which drove Jahn and Ling to their work, and to see how far the conditions had changed at the time of Rothstein.

France was mistress of Europe. Her political power was at its height. Her king and ministers practically framed the laws for the whole continent. Her armies marched victorious from one end of Europe to the other at will. Her language made inroads not only at the courts, but in polite society everywhere. Her thinkers and men of letters dominated far outside the political borders. French customs spread rapidly over Europe. She, in brief, threatened by her power to crush the independent national life, the national culture everywhere. No wonder, then, that patriotic men in many countries saw the diminishing influence of their own nationalities with sorrow and indignation, and arose, spontaneously

fired by a righteous wrath, to throw off the foreign yoke, political and social. Such a man was Jahn. German from the innermost recesses of his big soul, loving the German people, the German nation, not yet unified even in feelings, German history, language, literature, habits, his aim was freedom in all directions from foreign domination. He saw, he understood more thoroughly perhaps than any other of his countrymen that such freedom must be gained by enthusing his fellow men, by stirring their dormant national feelings, by kindling in their souls a burning hatred to the oppressors. Or if he did not see it more clearly than many others, he, at least, being a man of action, convinced of his own powers and of the righteousness of the cause, undertook to do it. Hence it was not only physical health, strength and agility, not merely the strengthening of the intellectual powers, but the creation of sentiment, of feeling, of love, of indignation, which stood before him as a goal. The flag carried before his Turner on their marches to Hasenheide was not merely a rag of bunting. It was the symbol of a beloved fatherland. The songs were not used merely to give the stimulus of music to the march, but in glorifying the beauties of nature, the deeds of German men, in paying homage to those who had fought and died for home and country, their purpose was to fan the flame of patriotic feeling, of love for Germany, for the land where they lived, for their own country, the country of their fathers and mothers, the country of their children. But flags and songs and speeches must be supplemented by action to be effective. The feelings must find their expression. This action the exercises provided, the plays, the games, the marches into the country, the gymnastics. And when the time for earnest action came, then the Turner were in the army assisting in the glorious work

of throwing the invaders back. We find that every Turnverein was a political center where plans were laid and executed to keep liberty high when assailed by external or internal foes. Politics was not a matter extraneous to Turnen. It was part of it. And it was a necessary part. Those who find fault with it and its "pic-nicking" have forgotten its history, have forgotten that it was the very life of the original Turnen, its reason for existence. And happy indeed is Germany that it was so; happy she may be called that all traces of it are not yet totally effaced, but plainly noticeable under the surface.

In Sweden essentially the same conditions existed at the change of the centuries as in Germany. Sweden as a world-power was no more. She no longer dictated the policy of Europe. It was no longer even question of a policy for her own benefit, but whether it paid her political leaders best to execute the behests of Russia or France. Money from both swelled the purses of Swedish "statesmen." Authors and artists sought their models in France. "The tongue of honor and heroes" was no longer kept pure, but was besmirched with multifarious French phrases. The national feeling was ebbing fast. A general decadence had apparently set in. But it was only the outer shell of national life which was destroyed. The core was sound. So, when the pendulum had made its swing, the return came. The young mental and moral aristocracy of the country rose in rebellion. Go back to the sturdy manhood of the forefathers! Take up anew their virile ideals! Do not pride yourselves of the deeds of the ancestors while you yourselves perish from inactivity! "Boast not ancestral honor; a man has but his own!" Up and be doing! Deliver yourselves and your people from bondage! And there shall rise again a reju-

venated Sweden, with right to glory in her old history and culture. So they preached in song and drama, with pen and brush and chisel. Art and literature no longer drew the inspiration from abroad. The old sagas furnished the themes of heroism and honor, devotion to duty and love of country and home. The spirit was again Swedish. So were the actions. A new period broke in. Darkness disappeared, the dawn came, and, as a lusty youth with a future, not only a past, stood Sweden again in the rank of nations.

Ling was one of the active spirits in this movement. His literary work was all of it consecrated to its service. Already in Copenhagen he came under the influence of such representatives of national renaissance in Danish literature as Oehlenschläger and Steffens. Later he felt the strength of the recreations of Swedish national song and history by Tegnér and Geijer, and reacted back on them, while the sculptors Fogelberg and Byström, the painters Sandberg and Wahlbom and a host of others drew inspiration from him. And his gymnastic work was driven forward by and intermingled with his general national activity. It was not a thing apart from his general feelings for nation and humanity; it entered into it and was itself pervaded by it. The general characteristics of Ling and Jahn were essentially the same. The differences were in details. And the same may be said of their work. The differences depended on local conditions rather than on a divergence in spirit. Sweden did not have a great war, upon which her very existence depended. The war was already over before Ling's work had taken solid form. There remained nothing but to "reconquer Finland within the boundary lines of Sweden herself." The reaction which settled upon Germany after the Holy Alliance was never so pronounced

in Sweden. Hence, politics became more prominent in its external manifestations in the former than in the latter country. But the spirit was the same in both. Rothstein may not have noticed it, because there was no need of the Swedish gymnasts becoming barricade heroes. Ling's work was also soon taken up by the Government, his pupils were, to great extent, military officers, and thus it happened that in time gymnastics in Sweden became somewhat aristocratic, contrary to the intentions of Ling, while Jahn's creation had to fight many a battle with the powers of the State, and therefore retained its democratic character, and even became a hall-mark of progressive opposition. Therein may be sought the internal causes of such differences which were not apparent in the beginning, differences which include both good and bad features of both systems to-day. In Sweden, the work of Ling became recognized, and hence freed from the dangers arising from the tendencies of irresponsible persons to "improve" upon that of which they have only perceived the surface. In Germany any leader of a Turnverein considered himself competent to invent and arrange new forms as they suited his fancy. Then there necessarily came in Sweden a time when the rules and regulations laid down by the authorities appeared more important than the spirit, when the form was maintained, while the life disappeared. At the same time the opposite tendency was noticeable in Germany; the spirit was that of old, but the forms in which this spirit was clothed fell to tatters. No wonder, then, that Rothstein concentrated his energy upon the formal methodical side of physical education, while, apparently, at least, looking down upon its social, mental and political phases. Though it must be admitted that in reality he laid all needed stress upon these features, too. But the Germans

of his day had nothing to learn from the other side of the Baltic in this regard. They could even with profit have turned masters themselves. But with regard to the formal side, there was very much for them to learn. The principle of all-possibility was not generally repudiated. Whatever blame was hurled at Rothstein by the Turner of his day, how much those of our own time may think of him as simply a disturber of the peace, who was happily killed off, no unbiased student can deny that he powerfully influenced them to the better.

In the preceding paragraphs an endeavor has been made to show that Ling's "friskgymnastik" and Jahn's "Turnen" were essentially alike in spirit and content. But among the Germans the term *Gymnastik* soon came to have a narrower sense than *Turnen*. Germans of our day and country have endeavored to make the two terms synonymous and to use them indiscriminately for the same idea, translating *Turnen* with gymnastics. The fact remains, however, that in the German language they are not synonyms. When Jahn invented, or resuscitated, the term *Turnen*, "*Gymnastik*" was segregated as only a small part of *Turnen*, and this part was supposed to have its purpose in "the mere development of the corporeal abilities," while the *Turnen* retained its more all-sided aim.¹ *Gymnastik* became a term of opprobrium. And in Sweden "*gymnastik*" has similarly been more and more circumscribed since Ling's time. It is true that we still find some who call horseback riding, swimming, skating and similar exercises "*gymnastik*," but when they do so they use the word in a loose way, and such exercises are habitually separated from "*gymnastik*" under the name of "*idrott*."

In an endeavor to make a close-fitting definition

1. See, for instance, GUTS MUTHS' *Turnbuch*. Preface.

covering our modern ideas and corresponding to our modern ideals, two questions arise therefor: Shall we expressly include or expressly exclude education to patriotism, love of freedom and manhood, hatred of oppression, etc., all of which was characteristic of the first period? I think neither, because it belongs to all education to rear independence and self-reliance, love of country and community, hatred of injustice. Gymnastics differs in that regard in no way from other educational branches. Are we to make the term so broad as to include all the physical activity which originally was included in it, or shall we yield to the commoner conception and narrow it to its usual present contents? I think there are advantages on both sides. The former procedure would be beneficial in so far as it might help to emphasize the importance of sports and play, which many of our gymnastic teachers perhaps look down upon. This danger, however, is small in the English-speaking countries. And, on the other hand, we must not forget that language is not made, but grows. It is the result of evolutionary forces, over which we, as individuals, have small influence, but to which we must all bow. I think, therefore, that the only possible way is to segregate gymnastics as a part of physical education in our definition, as we already have done it in our common parlance.

If this is agreed, then we must seek the distinguishing characteristics in the gymnastics, as we in our time understand the term, and other forms of physical education. I have already intimated this difference. Gymnastics is formal, predetermined by the teacher, both as regards the form of the movements entering in it, and as regard the exact time when and during which they are to be executed, the paths to be traversed and the

speed with which each individual movement shall be made and the order and speed with which they are to follow each other. Sports, "idrott," play, on the other hand, are guided in this respect by the exigencies of the moment. Predetermination is the prevailing character of the former, spontaneity of the latter. When the predetermination is lacking in movements intended for gymnastics, when, in other words, they are not performed in exact form and exact time, when precision is lost, we have no right to speak of them as gymnastics. Similarly with the sports and games. If the spontaneity is taken away, if the lash of the trainer be needed to keep the crew at work for the boat-race, if the movements of each man in the football team be predetermined by the coach, it is no longer sport, play, "idrott." relaxation; it is grinding toil, soul-killing athleticism, such as neither Ling nor Jahn ever thought of, but such as marked the degradation of physical training in ancient Greece.

Tentatively, at least, I would therefore propose this modified definition of gymnastics as in accord with the modern conception, and naturally evolved out of those of the great masters.

Gymnastics is the application of postures and movements in harmony with the conditions and needs of the organism, and predetermined with regard to space and time, for the purpose of placing the body under control of the will.

If this definition be accepted, we have established the first fundamental principle—that of gymnastic selection, as opposed to the ruinous one of all-possibility, and have drawn the distinction between gymnastics on the one hand, sports and play on the other.

FROM time to time, as more pressing labors permit, I will publish a number of articles on gymnastic questions. They will be divided into two series, A and B. The former will deal mainly with what is commonly known as educational gymnastics, the latter with therapeutic gymnastics.

I shall endeavor to make these papers constructive, but shall not avoid necessary criticism of methods in use, at present or in the past. Historical matter will consequently be interspersed to show the development of ideas, and references made to living authors.

The following papers are at present contemplated and partly planned:

SERIES A

- "The Purpose of Developmental Gymnastics."*
- "The Gymnastic Day's Order."*
- "Laws of Progression."*
- "The Basis of a Gymnastic Terminology."*
- "Order Movements."*
- "Heave Movements."*

SERIES B

- "The Technique of Massage."*
- "The Passive Movements."*
- "The Active Movements."*
- "The Gymnastic Treatment of Malnutritive Disturbances."*

The prices for these papers will vary.



JAKOB BOLIN

No. 645 Madison Avenue, New York City